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Letter dated 17 October 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of Germany, Namibia and Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Spain, together with Germany and Namibia, has the honour to transmit the Chair's summary of the second meeting of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, co-organized by the three countries and held in New York on 21 September 2017 as a follow-up to the meeting held in Alicante, Spain, earlier in 2017 (see annex). This initiative was launched on 23 September 2016 on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly.

We should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 65, and of the Security Council.

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Annex to the letter dated 17 October 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of Germany, Namibia and Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Chair's summary of the second meeting of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network

Women's participation in peace and security: conflict prevention and the security sector

New York, 21 September 2017

The Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network is a cross-regional forum of representatives of Governments and regional and international organizations. Launched in New York in September 2016, the Network aims to provide a space for the exchange of experiences and best practices on women and peace and security from the national and regional perspectives, and to advance the commitment of Member States to increasing the participation of women in peace and security policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels.

The first meeting of the Network was held in Alicante, Spain, in April 2017. The two-day meeting, which focused on national action plans on women and peace and security, brought together over 100 national focal points, government actors and civil society representatives from 61 countries. The Chair's summary of the meeting was transmitted to the Secretary-General and circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.[1]

On the margins of the general debate of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, the second meeting of the Network was held in New York on 21 September 2017, co-convened by Spain, together with Germany and Namibia, with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The three-hour meeting was attended by over 100 people, including focal points and national representatives from all regions, the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations. The meeting focused on promoting the participation of women and gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention and in the security sector, and on operational issues.

The opening plenary featured welcoming remarks by the three members of the Network Presidency: Ildefonso Castro López, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Spain; Patricia Flor, Director General for International Order, the United Nations and Arms Control of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany; and Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, national focal point and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation of Namibia. The opening remarks underscored the necessity for Member States to assume greater responsibility for implementing the normative framework on women and peace and security, working hand in hand with civil society and, increasingly, with regional organizations.

Francisco Javier Sanabria Valderrama, national focal point and Director General for the United Nations and Human Rights of Spain, moderated a panel discussion, which included the following participants:

(a) Lieutenant Colonel Rachel Grimes, Office of Military Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations;

[1] A/71/927-S/2017/485.

(b) Captain Dariia Malakhova, Senior Expert, NATO Division, Government Office for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers, Ukraine;

(c) Lieutenant Colonel Nombuso Hlengane, Police Planning Officer, Police Division, Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

After the panel presentations, representatives of the following countries delivered statements on the theme of the meeting: Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Italy, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. These were followed by statements from the African Union and the European Union, as well as by representatives from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Increasing the participation of women in the security sector

The 2015 global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) extensively documented the operational gains of women's participation in United Nations police and troops, highlighting the key roles played by female officers in protecting civilians. The study also showed that the participation of women in United Nations military missions has progressed at a very slow pace.

At the meeting, the panellists shared first-hand experiences of women soldiers who had enhanced operational effectiveness on the ground by listening to female and male civilians and by incorporating their concerns and suggestions into military plans in order to provide them with better protection. Visible and invisible structural barriers to the representation of women in United Nations military missions were shared, including: lack of awareness among military departments of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions; limited knowledge of national action plans; insufficient or inaccessible information for women in the police, military or civil sectors about work opportunities in the United Nations; and the preference of commanders and selection boards for the deployment of male officers.

The establishment of gender advisers within the ministries of defence and interior, a whole-government approach and accountability mechanisms for the implementation of national action plans are therefore crucial for advancing the women and peace and security agenda. The panellists shared information on initiatives to boost the participation of women. These included gender-sensitive recruitment, training and promotion processes, the establishment of quotas and other temporary special measures for women, including exclusive training for female officers as part of their professional development opportunities, mentorship programmes, the creation of women's networks within the ministries to ensure organizational transformation and the review of deployment processes to identify the criteria that may have a negative impact on women's access to deployment or career development opportunities.

Member States also shared good practices for increasing the participation of women in their defence and security institutions. Brazil referred to the participation of military women in their contingent in Haiti and the existence of quotas for women in military academies. Chile reported that a regulation allowing women to become generals had been approved. Canada reported that its armed forces had established a directive to integrate Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions into planning, doctrine and operations, and the new national defence policy had introduced a commitment to women and peace and security and to gender equality, which had been endorsed at the political level. Civil society

organizations were invited to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the policy to ensure transparency, accountability and expertise.

The United Kingdom shared information on the upcoming launch of a senior-level military network in Vancouver, Canada, where attendees will be encouraged to sign up as gender champions. Bangladesh reported that the country is planning to host a ministerial preparatory meeting and highlighted Government efforts, through school programmes, to encourage girls to consider joining the military as cultural norms can be a challenge to female participation in the military.

Norway informed the meeting of the development of a document on the inclusion of gender equality in peacekeeping training and peace processes, which could be disseminated through the Network. Furthermore, women and peace and security commitments are included in Norway's armed forces operations and deployments through guidance on a "gender perspective in armed forces operations".

Representatives of civil society organizations at the meeting noted the importance of two components of peacekeeping that can contribute to increasing the participation of women: (a) strengthening the recruitment processes and the professionalization of women in the security sector; and (b) gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations from mandate to implementation. Moreover, ensuring gender analysis and information in all relevant areas (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform and protection of civilians) is fundamental and requires adequate resources and support from mission leadership. Concerns about funding cuts on gender issues in the reform of peace operations were also mentioned. Finland agreed with other representatives regarding the importance of implementing gender analysis in peace operations and noted that, in the framework of the national action plan, ensuring career opportunities, information campaigns and cooperation with media to increase the visibility of crisis management as a career choice are important milestones.

Advancing holistic approaches of prevention

Participants at the meeting commended the increased attention of the Secretary-General to the women and peace and security agenda and his prioritization of conflict prevention, and several also expressed support for his launch of the voluntary compact to eradicate exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations. The United Kingdom expressed support for the Global Call for Women's Participation in Peace Processes, which is intended to promote the appointment of women as special representatives and deputy special representatives of the Secretary-General, and called for an increase of funding for gender-related issues.

Several country representatives noted that training soldiers in gender equality issues and increasing the number of women in the security sector are not a panacea. Italy and Portugal pointed to the need for "more holistic conflict prevention" measures, noting that adding women to the security sector does not prevent conflict. Gender equality, women's human rights and development, which are key to the women and peace and security agenda, have to be addressed simultaneously. South Africa defended the need for greater investment in grassroots organizations and in local women's empowerment in order for those women to become actors in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and sustainable peace within their communities.

The European Union took the opportunity to comment on the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls, which was jointly launched by the European Union and the United Nations and aims to implement the women and peace and security agenda. This statement was applauded by attendees. Generic

standards of behaviour are being developed and will be disseminated to all European Union personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations. Those standards are also being shared with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for possible inclusion in United Nations missions.

The African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop, commented that the inclusion of women in the troops deployed by the African Union had been an effective strategy for tackling sexual exploitation and abuse. The African Union was developing a zero-tolerance policy and a code of conduct regarding sexual exploitation and abuse that should complement existing tools for conducting judicial investigations and holding perpetrators accountable. She concluded her statement by reminding the meeting that the African Union Commission had reached parity between men and women at the top level, and that such parity needed to be achieved within the African Union troops as well.

National action plans on women and peace and security

Despite a great deal of effort by the international community to encourage Member States to use inclusive processes when developing national action plans on women and peace and security, just over 60 countries have formulated such action plans to date. There was thus a need for continued advocacy at the local, national, regional and international levels and for the exchange of specific and practical ideas and best practices on how to design and implement national action plans and accelerate the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, for which purpose the Network was instrumental.

The importance of national action plans as tools to measure the advancement of women in the peace and security agenda was stressed by all participants. Several speakers underlined the need to increase cooperation between ministries (whole-government approach) to ensure efficiency and better results. The need to develop national action plans, even in peaceful regions and countries, and the need for those national action plans to address emerging trends (such as migration and humanitarian crises, terrorism and sexual violence) were also underscored.

Several speakers updated the meeting on their countries' national action plan development processes. Brazil launched the development of its first national action plan on 8 March 2017. Namibia is in the process of developing its first national action plan, which is expected to accelerate the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the country. South Africa is planning to hold a meeting on the development of its national action plan in October 2017. Canada is reviewing its first national action plan, and France will begin the review of its second national action plan in 2018. Both Germany and Spain launched their second national action plans in 2017. Chile reported that, for the first time, progress indicators had been included in its recently adopted second national action plan. Slovenia noted that the first meeting of the Network had informed preparations for its second national action plan, which will be completed by the end of 2017. Finland is developing its third national action plan. Italy launched its third national action plan with a flagship initiative for the establishment of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network. The Philippines announced the recent launch of its third national action plan and highlighted its national "informal peace table", where women, young people and people with disabilities are given the opportunity to contribute to the peace and security agenda. Norway is about to start work on its fourth national action plan.

Namibia, South Africa and Thailand are implementing other women and peace and security frameworks through their national measures and guidelines. The United States is producing a toolkit to support the development of national action plans,

which is to be launched later in 2017. Slovenia reported the organization of a regional meeting on women and peace and security, dedicated to national action plans of Western Balkan countries, in February 2018.

The European Union indicated that its Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy named gender equality and women and peace and security as cross-cutting issues, that 18 out of 28 members had a national action plan, that a regional action plan was currently being revised and updated and that a European regional network for women and peace and security would soon be created. The African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security reiterated that 19 African countries had created national action plans and that several subregional action plans were being developed.

Operational issues of the Network and coordination with other networks

UN-Women will serve as the secretariat of the Network from September 2017 onwards. It was requested that the secretariat develop operational guidelines for the functioning of the Network by the end of 2017 and that it prepare regular newsletters highlighting best practices, recent developments and specific projects that focal points may wish to share. Chile suggested that the Network be used, inter alia, as an observatory and information hub for members to access data, policies, laws and best practices of other countries. The United Kingdom observed that sharing information on programming between donors and recipients can increase coherence and prevent overlaps.

The participants also mentioned additional opportunities for the sharing of information. Norway mentioned the launch, in cooperation with the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, of the Global Women, Peace, and Security Index in October 2017. The United States suggested sharing best practices in countering violent extremism and terrorism at the meeting in Berlin in 2018. Thailand advocated for the creation of a network of female peacekeepers to promote information sharing among them.

Future opportunities for synergies with other relevant initiatives such as regional focal point networks, the African Women Leaders Network, the various networks of women mediators or networks of civil society organizations, such as the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, were also emphasized as fundamental to accelerating progress in this area.

Integration of civil society organizations within the Network

Participants highlighted the need to include civil society organizations within the Network, to clearly identify their roles, to include them in decision-making processes and to find alternatives and mechanisms to fund their projects and ideas. In this regard, Canada assured the meeting that Canadian civil society organizations would be attending the meeting of the Network in Berlin in 2018.

Italy, which is currently implementing its third national action plan, provided information about the involvement of civil society organizations in the completion of the plan and its future implementation, thanks to public funding. Italy further stressed that civil society organizations should be part of the consultations and decisions related to women and peace and security. Along with Italy, representatives from the United Kingdom and Thailand suggested that, to obtain a better understanding of first-hand experiences in conflict prevention and peacekeeping, the Network should continue to welcome the active participation of civil society organizations and to invite to its meetings women representatives of local communities and organizations dedicated to women and peace and security.

The need to find innovative funding models for women's civil society organizations working on the frontline of conflict prevention and countering violent extremism was also highlighted. South Africa shared its approach of collecting input from the grassroots level on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, and called for the participation of the Pan-African Women's Organization in this network, due to its regular contact with local-level organizations.

Closing remarks

In his closing remarks, the Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme, UN-Women, Yannick Glemarec, emphasized the potential of national action plans to address structural barriers that prevent the participation of women in peace and security. The Assistant Secretary-General noted that the increased participation of women could help create a more trusted, representative and legitimate security apparatus and contribute to building stable and just societies. However, the proportion of women in police and military forces still remained low. Recent developments, such as the launch of the system-wide strategy on gender parity by the Secretary-General and the ongoing discussions between UN-Women, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in the development of a dedicated strategy, in consultation with troop- and police-contributing countries, to significantly increase the numbers of women peacekeepers and police in peacekeeping missions would integrate the outcomes of the discussions of the Network meetings. Mr. Glemarec concluded his remarks by reiterating UN-Women's commitment as the secretariat of the Network to continuing to provide technical and logistical support for biannual and expert meetings, including the meeting in Berlin in 2018. A database of members of the Network created by Spain, as the initiator and Chair of the Network in 2017, would be regularly updated. The production of regular newsletters and the mapping of national and regional actions and initiatives related to women and peace and security would also be ensured.

Key action points

The following key action points were agreed upon at the second meeting of the Network:

(a) Implementation of women and peace and security commitments

(i) Increase efforts to nominate gender focal points among national police services in order to facilitate the sharing of best practices and the deployment of female police officers to peacekeeping operations;

(ii) Stress the importance of nominating a minimum of 20 per cent female police officers;

(iii) Review deployment processes and revise criteria and procedures that may have negative effects on women;

(b) Knowledge management and information sharing

(i) Secretariat to produce and disseminate a regular newsletter;

(ii) Secretariat to draft, in coordination with the Chair and the other two members of the Presidency, operational guidelines on the functioning of the Network by the end of 2017;

(iii) Network to serve as an observatory and information hub for members to access data, policies, laws and best practices of other countries;

(iv) Disseminate information about upcoming events (i.e., senior-level military network in Vancouver, Canada; regional meeting dedicated to national action plans of Western Balkan countries; launch of the Global Women, Peace, and Security Index);

(v) Disseminate knowledge products to the network (document on the inclusion of gender equality in peacekeeping training and peace processes and Global Women, Peace, and Security Index);

(c) Closing the gap between the global and the field levels

(i) Network to include civil society organizations among its members;

(ii) Secretariat and focal points to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations in the next meeting of the Network in Berlin;

(iii) Secretariat and focal points to facilitate the participation of grassroots-level women leaders/representatives in the next meeting of the Network in Berlin;

(iv) Secretariat and focal points to explore innovative funding models for civil society organizations working on the frontline of conflict prevention and countering violent extremism;

(d) Increased coordination with other networks and existing structures

(i) Secretariat to liaise with other national and regional initiatives;

(ii) Establish links with other civil society initiatives (including the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security and the Pan-African Women's Organization);

(iii) Plan the creation of a network of female peacekeepers.